

South Korea: Intelligence Service To Boost Foreign Technology Collection

South Korea's National Intelligence Service (NIS) will place more emphasis on collecting foreign high technology. According to the 25 March 2003 *Choson Ilbo*, the country's largest daily newspaper, the NIS deputy director in charge of overseas information has been told by the new government to "greatly expand" what had previously been the "subsidiary" function of gathering overseas business information. *Yonhap*, the ROK's semi-official news agency, noted on the same day that "bolstering the agency's capability to gather foreign economic information" would be one of the main tasks required of the new director.

According to these sources, President No Mu-hyon aims to "de-politicize the NIS" (*Yonhap*) and "eliminate domestic information gathering" (*Choson Ilbo*).

Media reports over the past several years, however, indicate that previous ROK administrations have also used the spy agency to collect proprietary foreign technology and business information.

- *Tong-a Ilbo*, South Korea's second oldest daily newspaper, on 19 January 1994 carried segments of an address by the NIS (then Agency for National Security Planning) director to President Kim Yong-Sam on the need to "emphasize the collection of economic and industrial" data to support economic competitiveness.
- *Yonhap* on 26 December 1997 reported that President-elect Kim Dae-jung had approved the groundwork for an "intensive build up of economic collection capabilities" by the agency against foreign countries.
- *Sindong-A*, a monthly political and economic news magazine, described on 1 July 1999 a NIS "master plan" for "collecting intelligence on industrial technology." The plan reportedly coincided with intensified efforts by other ROK government institutions to informally gather foreign proprietary technology, reported by the magazine to be one of the "most important" items in the administration's foreign agenda.